

(71)

# A Description of the PAINTING of the T H E A T E R IN OXFORD.

**I**N imitation of the Ancient Theaters of the Greeks and Romans, which were too large to be covered with Lead or Tyle, this is supposed to be open: and as they stretched a Cordage from Pilaster to Pilaster, upon which they strained a covering of Cloth, to protect the People from the injuries of the weather; so here is a Cord-moulding gilded, that reaches cross and cross the House both in length and breadth, which supporteth a great Reddish Drapery, supposed to have covered the Roof, but now furled up by the Genii round about the House, towards the Walls, which discovereth the open Air, and maketh way for the descent of the Arts and Sciences, that are congregated together in a Circle of Clouds; to whose Assembly Truth descends, as being solicited and implored by the most of them. For joy of this Festival the other Genii sport about the Clouds, with their Festoons of Flowers and Laurels; and prepare their Garlands of Laurels and Roses, viz. Honor and Pleasure, for the great Lovers and Students of those Arts. And that the Assembly may be perfectly happy, their great Enemies and Disturbers, Envy, Rapine, and Brutality, are Genii of their opposite Virtues, viz. Prudence, civility, and Eloquence, driven from the Society, and tumbled down head-long from the Clouds.

The report of the Assembly of the one, and the Expulsion of the other, is proclaimed through the open and serene Air by some other of the Genii, who blowing their Antick Trumpets, divide themselves into the several Quarters of the World.

This in Gross.

But more particularly, the Circle of Figures consists of Theology, with her Book of seven Seals, imploring the assistance of Truth for the unfolding of it. On her left hand is the Mosaical Law Veiled, with the Tables of Stone, to which she points with her Iron Rod. On her right side is the Gospel, with the Cross in one hand, and a Chalice in the other. In the same Division, over the Mosaical Law, is History holding up her Pen as dedicating it to Truth, and an attending Genius with several Fragments of Old Writing, from which she collects her History into her Book. On the other side of the Gospel is Divine Poésie, with her Harp of David's fashion.

On the other side of the Circle, opposite to Theology, in three Squares, are the Mathematical Sciences, (depending on Demonstration, as the other on Faith :) In the first of which is Astronomy with the Celestial Globe, Geography with the Terrestrial, together with three attending Genii.

In the next is Arithmetick with a Paper of Figures; Optick with her Perspective Glass; Geometry with a pair of Compass in her left, and a Table with Lines drawn in it in her right hand.

In another Square, on the West side of the Circle, is Law, with her Ruling Scepter, accompanied with

Records, Patents, and Evidences, on the one side, and on the other with Rhetorick, by which is an attending Genius, with the Scales of Justice, and a Figure with a Palm-Branch, (the Emblem of Reward for virtuous Actions) and the Roman Fasces, the Marks of Power and Punishment. Printing, with a Case of Letters in one hand, and a Form ready set in the other, and by her several Sheets hanging as a drying.

On that side the Circle, opposite to Law, is Physick, with the Knotty Staff of Æsculapius, with a Serpent winding about it: The Herbalist, imploring the assistance of Truth for the right understanding of the Nature of her Plants: Chymistry, with a Bolt head in her hands: Chyrurgery, as preparing her self to finish the Dissection of an Head, which hath the Brain already opened, and is held before her by one of the Genii. In the Triangle on the right hand of the Gospel is Logick in a posture of Arguing. In the Triangle on the left hand of the Mosaical Law is Musick, with her Antick Lyre and Paper of Musick-notes on her knee, with a Genius by her (a little within the next Circle) playing on a Fiddle, being the Emblem of the most ancient Musick. Dramatick Poetry with a Vizor, representing Comedy, a bloody Dagger for Tragedy, the Reed Pipe for Pastoral.

In the midst of these Squares and Triangles (as descending from above) is the Figure of Truth sitting on a Cloud; in one hand she holds a Palm-branch, (the Emblem of Victory) in the other the Sun, whose Brightness enlightens all the Circle of Figures, and is so bright, that it sometimes hides the face of her self to us that are below.

Over the Entrance of the Front of the Theater are Three Figures tumbling down; first Envy with her Snaky hairs, Squint eyes, Haggs breasts, Pale venomous Complexion, Strong, but ugly Limbs, and Riveling skin, frighted from above by the sight of Pallas her Shield with the Gorgon's head in it, against which she would oppose the biggest of her Snakes, but her fall is so precipitous that she hath no command of her Arms.

Then Rapine with her fiery Eyes, grinning Teeth, sharp Twangs, her Hands imbrued in blood, holding a bloody Dagger in one hand, in the other a burning Flambeau; with which Instruments she would seize on, or destroy, not only Learning, but her Habitations, but is prevented and overcome by an Herculean Genius, or Power.

Next that, brutish scoffing Ignorance, that endeavoureth to vilifie and contemn what she understandeth not, represented by a Satyr, which is charmed by a Mercurial Genius with his Caduceus.